



AVIAN INFLUENZA FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS FOR THE GENERAL PUBLIC

http://www.nj.gov/agriculture/divisions/ah/diseases/avian_influenza.html

What is Avian Influenza?

Avian Influenza (AI)—the bird flu—is a common viral disease of birds, especially poultry. There are many types of the AI virus that can cause sickness in birds in varying degrees and can cause death.

AI is categorized into two forms: Low Pathogenic Avian Influenza (LPAI) and High Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI). AI viruses are also given letter and number sequences to define the different subtypes.

Currently, there is a HPAI subtype called H5N1 that is circulating in Asia, Europe, and Africa. This subtype has caused illness in poultry and in small numbers of people, and may have the potential to mutate into a form that can spread from human to human.

LPAI subtypes are less dangerous than HPAI to birds—some birds infected with LPAI do not even become sick. While not considered to be a human health risk, people in close contact with any poultry or poultry waste products (feces) need to utilize proper protective equipment and implement basic hygienic practices to prevent contracting associated illnesses or conditions.

Is the HPAI H5N1 present in the U.S.?

No, currently this type has been only found in Asia, Europe, and Africa.

Are you going to test wild birds for AI?

Yes, in fact NJ state and federal agriculture and wildlife agencies have begun testing, concentrating on the type of birds most likely to be infected (waterfowl).

Waterfowl, such as ducks and geese, are a top priority to be tested. The vast majority of backyard songbirds—robins, sparrows, cardinals, etc. are not as commonly infected. Any type of birds that are found dead should be reported to one of the agencies listed at the end of this document. If testing is recommended, instructions will be provided.

I found a dead bird in my yard—what should I do?

If you see dead waterfowl bird, a dead crow, or a number of dead birds in the same place, call any of the agencies listed below. These agencies will communicate with each other to decide if testing is needed. You will be instructed what to do with the bird. Because birds can carry all types of disease, birds should be handled using a shovel and protective gloves.

Should I stop feeding wild birds?

At this time, there is no need to change your normal practices for feeding backyard birds at birdfeeders. If HPAI H5N1 does occur in the U.S., experts may have different advice depending on what has been learned about the role of wild birds.

In any circumstance, it is not recommended that you feed geese, ducks, and other waterfowl. Doing so increases the chance of spreading disease, makes them tame and causes them to lose their natural behaviors becoming nuisances. It is best to enjoy your local wildlife from a distance!

What about Canada goose droppings in parks, ballparks, reservoirs, and other public places?

Because many different bacteria, viruses, and parasites can be present in bird droppings, it is best to avoid exposure to them at all times. Teach children to wash their hands after playing outside. If you remove droppings from walkways, always use a shovel, “pooper scooper,” or gloves—never your bare hands. If you are worried about exposure during swimming, swim at a regulated beach, where water is routinely tested.

Should I stop hunting waterfowl?

No, it is not necessary to stop hunting waterfowl. However, hunters should always take simple precautions to protect themselves from exposure to disease, including:

- Do not handle obviously sick birds or birds found dead.
- Keep your game birds cool, clean, and dry.
- Do not eat, drink, or smoke while cleaning harvested waterfowl.
- Wear rubber gloves when cleaning waterfowl.
- Wash your hands with soap and water after cleaning waterfowl.
- Clean tools and surfaces immediately with hot soapy water and disinfect with a mixture of 10 percent household bleach (1 part bleach to 10 parts water).
- Thoroughly cook harvested waterfowl (165° F).

Is it safe to eat poultry and eggs?

Yes. There is no evidence that properly cooked poultry or eggs can be a source of AI infection. Because eating undercooked poultry or eggs can spread other diseases such as salmonella, always thoroughly cook poultry products. Wash your hands with soap and hot water after touching any raw meat. Make sure to clean cutting boards and counters used for poultry food preparation immediately after use to prevent cross contamination with other foods.

Is it safe for my child to take part in projects that involve hatching eggs and raising chicks?

Yes. However, children should minimize hand contact when conducting projects involving hatching eggs and raising chicks and should thoroughly wash their hands after handling.

Can I get AI from my neighbor's animals?

No, AI is a disease among birds and rarely spreads to other animals and humans. Most people who got sick with AI in Asia and Europe had direct contact with infected poultry without utilizing proper protective equipment or practicing basic sanitary practices. If HPAI H5N1 occurs in our country, additional guidance from experts will be issued.

Can pets get avian influenza?

In rare occasions where HPAI H5N1 has occurred, cats and other mammals have become sick and died after eating infected birds.

What can I do to protect my pets from avian influenza? Is there a vaccine?

There is no AI vaccine for pets at this time. The best way to prevent your pet from contracting disease is by limiting their exposure to wildlife. Do not let pets roam

outside where they could be exposed to or eat the remains of sick or dead wildlife.

My pet found a dead bird, what should I do?

If you have concerns about your pet's health, it is best to monitor your pet's health and contact a veterinarian.

Can contact with pets or pet stores give me AI?

There have been no confirmed cases of AI transmission between humans and animals in pet stores. However, it is a good practice to wash your hands after handling your pet or visiting a pet store. It is always best to have a veterinarian check your new pet prior to or shortly after purchase.

State and Federal Agency Contact Information:

**New Jersey Department of Agriculture,
Division of Animal Health**
(609) 292-3965 - Office
(609) 292-3965 - After-Hours Emergency

**New Jersey Department of Environmental
Protection, Division of Fish and Wildlife**
(609) 292-2965 - Office
1-877-927-6337 - Emergency Hotline

**New Jersey Department of Health and Senior
Services, Infectious and Zoonotic Diseases**
(609) 588-3121 - Office
(609) 392-2020 - After-Hours Emergency

USDA—APHIS, Veterinary Services, New Jersey
(609) 259-8387 – Office & Emergency

USDA—APHIS, Wildlife Services, New Jersey
(908) 735-5654 – Office
(908) 623-7400 – After-Hours Emergency